

**Town of Pines Public Meeting  
February 4, 2003  
Michigan City Library**

About 170 people attended the February 4, 2003, meeting held at the Michigan City Library, Michigan City, Indiana. The meeting's purpose was to provide Pines residents and other interested people with an update of the activities concerning the Pines Ground-Water Plume Contamination Site.

Janet Pope, U.S. EPA community involvement coordinator, began the meeting at 6:30 pm, by introducing the key speakers and asking residents to hold all questions until after all the presentations. She explained that numbers had been assigned and she would call each number in order. If the individual no longer wanted to ask a question or make a comment, Ms. Pope asked that they just say "pass" and she would go to the next number.

The following are a summary of comments from each of the speakers.

**Ken Thiesen, U.S. EPA, Emergency Response**

- The main part of the contamination which he had announced last summer remains the same – Liberty to Ash Streets.
- An additional area of concern is now included in the project; about 7 or 8 homes on Columbia, Florida, Idaho and one house on Illinois were found to have elevated levels of boron and molybdenum
- The remedy for this site is hook up to Michigan City water
- EPA has reached an agreement with the responsible parties. NIPSCO and the 3 Brown's companies have agreed on the project and engineering plans are beginning
- December 1, 2003 - substantial completion achieved (means about 130 homes will be connected to Michigan City water supply)
- June 1, 2004 - final completion, including roads repaired, landscaping, wells abandoned
- Access agreements will have to be signed by residents to install water hookups. These agreements will also state that the wells have to be abandoned. Residents will not be hooked up to the city water supply if the access agreements are not signed.
- He will remain involved in the project until it is completed and can be contacted for any questions or concerns

**Don Babcock**

- Beverly Shores resident and is very interested in the site and remedy
- Stated that the company cares about the community and homes; that this is a substantial project and investment (about \$2 million)

- Stated that the hook ups should improve property values and could potentially reduce tax liabilities of local property owners
- Looking for others to join in on the project; for example, Beverly Shores Association and National Dunes Association

**Matt Mankowski, U.S. EPA Remedial Project Manager**

- Ken's program is driven by RAL (removal action levels), Matt's program is the remedial side, which is a long-term program and more wide scale than the emergency response
- The remedial program takes a "regional picture" of the future; it looks at the site as a whole
- Remedial program looks at the risks and problems associated with the site that are not addressed under the removal program

**Randy Russell, Michigan City Public Works**

Summary of his comments:

- His role comes in "after the fact"
- Makes sure citizens have good, clean water
- Will keep drawings in his office
- The water hookups provide a lot of good things; he is glad the responsible parties are getting the project underway

No representative from the Brown's companies was available for comments.

During the public comment period, residents were asked to ask their question or make their comment in numerical order, according to the number they received when they signed up. Janet Pope facilitated this portion of the meeting.

- Q. A resident asked if empty lots would get water hook-ups.
- A. EPA replied that empty lots would not get water hookups unless the responsible parties want to hook up empty lots. According to the signed agreement, they are not responsible to do this.
- Q. A resident from Illinois Avenue stated he received a letter stating that his water tested at 280 ppb of boron and above the RAL levels for manganese and asked why he was not getting the water hookup. He also asked that if he wanted to hook up at his cost, can it be done at the same time as the other houses.
- A. EPA replied that there is no standard for manganese so houses that did not test above RALs for boron are not included in the hookups that will be paid for. The homeowner can hire their own

contractor to hook up or it may be more cost effective to use the contractors that are hooking up the affected houses. The privately-paid hookups can occur at the same time as long as the contractor can guarantee EPA that there will be no delays in the affected homes being hooked up.

- Q. A resident from Louisiana Avenue stated his well was tested and the results showed boron at 506 ppm and manganese at 747 and he wanted to know the health risks. He also asked how continued health risks would be determined if the well is only tested once.
- A. EPA referred the resident to Mark Johnson regarding health risks associated with boron and manganese. It was explained that there is a provision in the Administrative Order by Consent that the responsible parties and IDEM will set up a plume area to sample at intervals; a risk assessment will be conducted under the remedial program.
- Q. The resident also asked all panel members for their personal opinion in answering his question, "If you have grandchildren or children would you let them drink the water?"
- A. All panel members replied no.
- Q. The resident expressed his gratitude in a truthful answer, but also expressed his frustration that no one would let their kids or grandchildren drink the water, yet he is told he is in a safe area.

There was some general comments made from the audience at this time. Many people expressed their belief that they are still not getting answers about the health risks involved.

IDEM commented that Ken was dealing with RALs - short term response and that the remedial phase was beginning. He stated that the remedial phase will be a long-term project and will completely evaluate the site risks and health affects.

A resident commented, "It really doesn't matter as long as it isn't my house."

- Q. A resident asked if the Pines site will still be on the Superfund list.
- A. EPA replied that the process will not stop. However, there are many options under Superfund. EPA can do many things without the site actually being on the NPL.
- Q. How long did it take the plume to travel across Highway 20?
- A. EPA replied that they are not really sure, maybe decades. In the Administrative Record, there is a final report on the investigation that can be read.
- Q. Is the plume traveling?
- A. EPA replied that the plume has a northerly component, then once it crosses Highway 20, it turns due east.
- Q. Are there any grants available for the unaffected homes to get the money to pay for the hookups?
- A. EPA is not aware of any mechanisms available.

- A. Ms. Voss, President of Pines Council, replied that they have looked into the possibility, but the town is not eligible for any grants. However, they are still gathering information.
- Q. A resident asked if the town should look into hiring someone to write a grant.
- A. There was no response to this question, however, residents were encourage to attend the town council meeting being held the following night (February 5).
- Q. A resident on Idaho who is in the affected area and will have the hookup paid for expressed concern that now he will have to pay a monthly water bill and wondered if there was any financial help for the water bills.
- A. EPA replied that water bills are the responsibility of the home owner.
- Q. A resident asked if wells had to be capped.
- A. EPA replied if the home owner is connecting to city water, the existing well must be capped.
- Q. A resident stated they had purchased a new home, put a well in with a filtration system and the contaminants are below the RALs; but questions how it can be said that the affected areas are the only areas contaminated if not all areas have been tested. Many residents brought up their concerns about not being tested and why not all homes were being tested.
- A. EPA replied that it can't be known unless the wells are tested, but EPA or IDEM can't test every home. Homeowners who are concerned should talk with the State of Indiana.
- Q. A homeowner asked if a water softener has any affect on the contaminated water.
- A. EPA replied that it should not make a difference; filters do not take out boron.
- Q. Some residents expressed concern that the contamination will seep into other areas and that perhaps the buffer should be widened.
- A. EPA replied that wherever you draw a line, someone is always on the other side. The buffer lines were drawn based on data. There may be more testing under the remedial phase of the project. It was stated that in the remedial phase more testing in the peripheral area plus monitoring that usually continues for 30 years.
- Q. A resident asked if capping 130 wells would change the direction of the water flow?
- A. The response was, "possibly."
- Q. Residents wanted information on testing their own water - how often it should be tested, how much does it cost, what is the name of the test.
- A. Response was annually or at the change of seasons; there is an EPA-approved test for about \$200. EPA has a list of potential testing sources.

- Q. Residents asked about the pollution sources - when will Yard 520 start getting cleaned up and/or closed. And they asked what was being done to prevent further contamination.
- A. The source areas and their risks will be addressed during the remedial phase. Regarding the Yard, they have asked for a permit to continue operating and that request is currently being reviewed by IDEM. Because Yard 520 applied before their permit expired they are allowed to continue to operate while the permit request is being reviewed.
- Q. Residents expressed concern that there have been wording modifications in the area of concern (Yard 520) and that the report to IDEM doesn't mention the northerly component, which will influence IDEM's decision on the permit and the residents believe the Town of Pines should have representation in making the permit decision.
- A. IDEM and EPA responded that during the next steps there will be public meetings and public comment opportunities for residents to discuss these issues; this particular meeting does not address permit issues and it was suggested that residents contact their local congressmen or the IDEM commissioner for more information.
- Q. What about the homes across the landfill?
- A. Almost every house across Pines Landfill was tested and out of 130 homes; only 30 are currently receiving bottled water.
- Q. A county resident asked why his water was not tested.
- A. Four houses in the county perimeters were tested and no contamination was found.
- Q. Is there a plan for health risk studies?
- A. More data needs to be collected and a risk assessment will be developed to address this issue - this is part of the next phase.
- C: A resident stated that he bought his property 30 years ago and his and all these other properties are devalued because of something they had no control over. [No response was given]
- Q: How much money has been spent on testing? And why can't testing be continued?
- A. EPA's estimate for the past nine months is \$50 to \$75 thousand dollars for sampling. The law does not allow for testing to continue under this phase.
- Q. A resident suggested that the law be changed and asked if fly ash was regulated.
- A. Response was possibly the law should be changed and residents should contact their local congressmen to address the law and that the state should be contacted regarding the regulation of fly ash.

Janet Pope closed the meeting by thanking everyone for attending.

[These notes are not official public transcript.]